



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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District of Arizona*

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## **SOUTH PHOENIX ARMED DRUG DEALER SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON**

PHOENIX – Placido Vasquez-Torres, 25, of Mexico, was sentenced here on May 21 to 181 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Susan R. Bolton. His co-defendant, Erasmo Otero-Soto, 23, of Mexico, was sentenced on March 12 by Judge Bolton to 157 months in federal prison. Both Vasquez-Torres and Otero-Soto were convicted by a jury on November 16, 2006, of charges related to armed illegal drug dealing.

On January 11, 2006, based on tips provided by concerned citizens, Phoenix police set up surveillance of a South Phoenix apartment located at 2053 East Atlanta. Vasquez-Torres and Otero-Soto were observed working together as they sold illegal drugs to persons who approached the apartment on foot, bicycle, and vehicle. At one point between transactions, a van driving nearby backfired. Vasquez-Torres quickly exited the apartment with an AK-47 style rifle, scanned the area, and returned inside the apartment. After several additional transactions, police approached Vasquez-Torres and Otero-Soto as they stood in the apartment parking area. Both Vasquez-Torres and Otero-Soto turned and ran from the police, towards the apartment. While running, Otero-Soto fell to the ground and was arrested. Vasquez-Torres leapt over Otero-Soto, then ran into the apartment while tossing away baggies of methamphetamine. Police arrested him moments later. On Otero-Soto, police found a Taurus 9mm handgun and baggies of methamphetamine and cocaine. On Vasquez-Torres, police found \$3139 in cash and a Jesus Malverde pendant. In the apartment, police found quantities of drugs packaged for sale, including marijuana, cocaine, crack, and methamphetamine. They further found drug packaging materials, scales, the AK-47 style rifle, and \$16,000 in counterfeit U.S. currency.

This prosecution in federal court is part of the District of Arizona's Project Safe Neighborhoods, an illegal firearms enforcement program. The effectiveness of Project Safe Neighborhoods in Arizona is based on the ability of federal, state, and local agencies to cooperate in a unified offensive that is led by the U.S. Attorney. Through ongoing partnerships among federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies, like the one in this case, the U.S. Attorney is implementing a series of strategies that are contoured to fit the specific firearms crime problems throughout Arizona.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Phoenix Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The prosecution was handled by Michael Lee, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona.

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